

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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P 221414Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4194  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, IS  
SUBJECT: CABINET CRISIS

REF:TEL AVIV 8545

1. PRIME MINISTER RABIN MET WITH THE LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 21 AND EXPLAINED THE STEPS HE HAD TAKEN IN RECENT DAYS IN CONNECTION WITH THE EXPULSION OF THE NRP FROM THE CABINET AND THE RESIGNATION OF HIS GOVERNMENT. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED HIS MOVES AND HIS CALL FOR EARLY ELECTIONS. IT NOW APPEARS THAT RABIN WILL TABLE A BILL IN THE KNESSET MONDAY, DECEMBER 27, TO PROPOSE THAT THE KNESSET BE DISSOLVED AND THAT ELECTIONS BE HELD IN MAY.HE IS STILL SEEKING THE AGREEMENT OF THE OTHER MAJOR PARTIES ON THIS BUT THE MOST LIKELY DATE FOR THE ELECTIONS IS SAID TO BE TUESDAY, MAY 17. INTENSE POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS CONTINUING.

2. THE LIKUD APPARENTLY INTENDS TO BE AS TOUGH AS POSSIBLE AND, UNDERSTANDABLY, TO USE THE PRESENT CRISIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY  
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TO FURTHER ITS POLITICAL GOALS. FOR EXAMPLE, LIKUD LEADER BEGIN HAS SAID THAT PRESIDENT KATZIR SHOULD PROCEED WITH CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL KNESSET FACTIONS IN ORDER TO EXAMINE FULLY THE POSSIBILITY OF FORMING AN ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT. HE AND OTHER LIKUD LEADERS HAVE EMPHASIZED AGAIN THEIR DESIRE FOR A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD

INCLUDE THE LIKUD. ONE RUMOR HAS THE LIKUD EXPLORING WITH PERES AND DAYAN THE POSSIBILITY OF RAFI FACTION MEMBERS LEAVING THE LABOR PARTY AND JOINING WITH THE LIKUD, THE NRP, THE RELIGIOUS TORAH FRON AND THE FREE CENTER TO FORM A GOVERNMENT; THIS OMBINATION WOULD CONTROL 57 SEATS--THE SAME AS THE PRESENT ALIGNMENT-ILP CARETAKER GOVERNMENT. ANOTHER RUMOR REPORTS THAT UN AMBASSADOR HERZOG WILL RESIGN HIS POSITION EARLY NEXT YEAR IN ORDER TO TAKE PART IN THE LABOR PARTY CAMPAIGN.

3. ONE OF THE NOTICEABLE ASPECTS OF THE CRISIS HAS BEEN THE SILENCE OF DEFENSE MINISTER PERES. WHILE MANY OBSERVERS HAVE COMMENTED TO A POTENTIAL ROLE FOR PERES (SEE ABOVE) AND HAVE SPECULATED THAT ONE OF THE FACTORS BEHIND RABIN'S MOVES HAS BEEN AT ATTEMPT TO OUT-MANEUVER PERES IN THEIR COMPETITION FOR LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP, THE DEFENSE MINISTER HIMSELF HAS BEEN QUIET. THE ONLY PUBLIC STATEMENT WE HAVE SEEN WAS A RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY RADIO ISRAEL IN WHICH PERES SAID THAT HE HAD NOT CHANGED HIS STAND AND THAT HE WOUL STILL BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER AT THE LABOR PARTY CONVENTION.

4. ADDING TO THE CONFUSION CAUSED BY THE CRISIS IS THE SITUATION OF THE ILP, WHICH FOR SEVERAL WEEKS HAD BEEN CONSIDERING WITHDRAWING FROM THE GOVERNMENT COALITION (SEE TEL AVIV 8174). ILP MINISTERS HAUSNER AND KOL SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS FROM THE COALITION TO RABIN MONDAY EVENING; UNDER ISRAELI LAW SUCH RESIGNATIONS ARE EFFECTIVE WITHIN 48 HOURS. HOWEVER, RABIN SUBMITTED HIW OWN RESIGNATION TO PRESIDENT KATZIR A FEW HOURS LATER; THE ALIGNMENT'S POSITION IS THAT THE ILP IS STILL A COALITION PARTNER BECAUSE OF THE RULE THAT HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMPOSITION OF A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE CHANGED. ATTORNEY GNERAL BARAK HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL REQUEST AN OPINION FROM THE HIGH COURT REGARDING THE POSITION OF THE TWO ILP MINISTERS.

5. A SECONDARY ASPECT WHICH STILL MUST BE CONSIDERD IS THE QUESTION OF MUNCIPAL ELECTIONS. CUSTOMARILY THESE ELECTIONS ARE HELD ON THE SAME DATE AS KNESSET ELECTIONS; A DECISION MUST NOW BE MADE WHETHER THESE ELECTIONS WILL BE MOVE FORWARD TO THE SAME DATE AS THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WILL BE HELD ON THE PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED DATE OF NOVEMBER 1, OR EVEN POSTPONED UNTIL SOME TIME IN 1978.

6. EVIDENCE IS NOW BEGINNNING TO EMERGE THAT FORMER PRIME MINISTER GOLDA MEIR HAS DECIDED TO SUPPORT PRIME MINISTER RABIN IN THE INTRA-LABOR PARTY LEDERSHIP CONTEST. OBSERVERS NOTE HER PARTICIPATION IN THE INNER GROUP OF LABOR PARTY LEADERS WITH WHOM RABIN CONSULTED LAST WEEKEND AND FEEL

THAT HER SUPPORT OF RABIN SHOULD BE A DECIDED PLUS IN HIS  
FAVOR AS HE CONFRONTS PERES AND POSSIBLY EBAN--OR A  
COMBINATION OF THE TWO.  
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